



Conservation Coalition

October 1, 2013

Speaker of the House Jase Bolger

Representative Jon Bumstead, House Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman

Representative Andrea LaFontaine, House Committee on Natural Resources Chairwoman

Representative Peter Pettalia, House Committee on Tourism Chairman

Re: HB 4993 – Wildlife Council, Public Education Fund

The Conservation Coalition represents many diverse voices of the sporting and conservation community, but shares a unified and common commitment to advancing Michigan's outdoor heritage through science-based wildlife and fisheries management and wise use of our state's natural resources. The Conservation Coalition believes that natural resources management – including hunting, fishing and trapping - is essential to the health of the state's ecosystem, our residents' high quality of life and the health of our economy. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in 2011 hunters, trappers, and anglers spent almost \$4.8 billion in Michigan alone, and \$90 billion nationwide. The sportsmen and women of the state *are* economic drivers.

While about one in five Michiganders hunt, fish, or trap, there is still 80 percent of our population that does not—yet we all benefit from the conservation and management of our natural resources and public lands. Traditionally, Michigan's license fees go to support wildlife and fisheries management, their habitat, and law enforcement, but we have not done a very good job of reaching the general public with this conservation message. This must change if Michigan's outdoor heritage is to remain into the future.

House Bill 4993 uses the new \$1 surcharge on the base hunting and fishing licenses (recently approved in HB 4668) to designate a fund specifically designed to educate the public about the contributions sportsmen and women make to fisheries and wildlife management and natural resources protection and enhancement. Modeled off of a similar fund in Colorado, this fund would not be for the Department of Natural Resources or other agencies to use as they wish, but would be overseen by an independent council who directs the expenditures and hires professionals to develop compelling messages for the general public.

As in Colorado, Michigan sportsmen and women are under attack from anti-hunting, anti-fishing, and anti-trapping groups who use their vast out-of-state money against us. The undersigned members of the Conservation Coalition support the creation of this new public education fund and council in order to both invest in natural resources and give us a chance to pool our collective resources through the \$1 surcharge to educate the public about the positive aspects of our rich sporting heritage in Michigan.

We respectfully ask that you move HB 4993 without delay. Thank you for giving our collective organizations the opportunity to contribute and we look forward to working with you on this necessary investment in public awareness and education about the vital role of hunters, anglers, and trappers in Michigan .

The Michigan Conservation Coalition

- Frank Krist, Hammond Bay Anglers Association
- Paul Sacks, Michigan B.A.S.S. Nation
- Erin McDonough, Michigan United Conservation Clubs
- Roger Thorman, Michigan Fox Hunters Association
- Michael Goyne, Michigan Quality Deer Management Association
- Joe Hudson, U.P. Bear Houndsmen Association
- Larry Visser, Ruffed Grouse Society
- George Lindquist, U.P. Whitetails of Marquette County
- Mike Thorman, Michigan Hunting Dog Federation
- Jim Wale, Michigan United Coon Hunters Association
- Matt Pedigo, Michigan Bear Hunters Association
- Ben Wickerham, Pheasants Forever
- Becky Humphries, Ducks Unlimited

CC: Director Keith Creagh, Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Chairman J.R. Richardson, Natural Resources Commission
Deputy Director Bill Moritz, Department of Natural Resources
Chief of Staff Dennis Knapp, Department of Natural Resources